



AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB, Texas



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Lackland lauds a trailblazer

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Lisa Marie Gómez
Express-News Staff Writer

Before he became the first African American to be hailed as the top noncommissioned officer in the Air Force, he was a role model to his six young children.

On Wednesday, retired Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Thomas N. Barnes, who died in 2003, was among nine enlisted men to have a building dedicated in his name at a Lackland AFB ceremonial event.

Building No. 9110, where the 322nd Training Squadron lives, will now be known as the "Barnes Training Complex."

"He was a father that would cook, clean, and help us with homework," said Hazel Lamb, 48, of Abilene, one of Barnes' four daughters. "He was very funny and he loved being a family man."

Barnes, who was also the first African American appointed to the top enlisted position in any of the United States services, was a veteran of the Korean and Vietnam wars. He served as a hydraulics specialist, crew chief, flight engineer, senior controller and noncommissioned officer in charge of maintenance control in support of B-25, B-52, C-45, F-4 and T-11 aircraft.

Barnes was appointed the fourth chief master sergeant of the Air Force, the service's top enlisted post, in 1973. At the end of his two-year term he was extended by the Air Force chief of staff for an additional year, and then was selected for an unprecedented second one-year extension.

"Tom Barnes led us through the turbulent years of post-Vietnam and the days of racial strife in our Air Force and proved that it is clearly leadership and character, not race, that matters," said the present Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Gerald R. Murray, to family, friends and hundreds of enlisted Air Force men and women.

The Air Force Basic Military Training Wing is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, and Wednesday's dedication was one of three days of events planned to honor this milestone.

Early in his career, Barnes experienced more than once the hardship that went with being black.

In the 1950s, when Barnes and others in his unit won first place in a competition, the group decided to go to a restaurant on Broadway to celebrate. As they entered the restaurant, someone told the group that Barnes would not be served because of the color of his skin.

"They told him he needed to go around the back and eat in the kitchen," said retired Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Robert Gaylor, a close friend of Barnes who succeeded him in that post in 1977. "And the other guys said, 'If we can't eat together, we won't eat here at all.'"

Later, when someone asked Barnes if the incident angered him, he replied, "No, I am not going to allow someone else's behavior to affect mine."

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Three of Barnes' daughters, Lamb, Thyra Barnes and Joyce Berry, were sitting in the audience and were teary-eyed when they heard this story.

"I can assure you, Chief Barnes was not selected because he was African American," Gaylor said at the building ceremony. "He was selected because he was the most qualified at that time."

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Air Force Times



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PILOT RESIGNS AFTER CHEATING SCANDAL

An Air Force instructor pilot resigned from the service amid charges that he helped 12 student pilots cheat on an emergency-procedures quiz.

Richard Brimer, who had held the rank of captain, was discharged under other than honorable conditions May 25, according to Rick Johnson, a spokesman for Columbus Air Force Base, Miss. Brimer had been a T-37 Tweet instructor with the 41st Flying Training Squadron at Columbus.

Brimer was facing a court-martial. He avoided the public trial by offering his resignation, Johnson said.

In July 2005 he was charged with conduct unbecoming an officer for distributing controlled test answers, making a false statement and failure to obey a lawful regulation.

All 12 student pilots were removed from the flying program in 2005, Johnson said.



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Cooper says VDA will stay on its same path of expansion

By Robert Barron Staff Writer

June 15, 2006

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- There is no need to re-invent the wheel, according to Mike Cooper. Cooper is slated to become a consultant for Vance Development Authority when his retirement from AT&T is final. Enid City Commission approved \$600,000 for VDA at its June 6 meeting to fund a five-year contract for Cooper at \$120,000 a year. Cooper has been working to protect and enhance Vance Air Force Base as a volunteer for 10 years, but since he was transferred to Tulsa, some job conflicts have developed. His contract with VDA tentatively calls for Cooper to start in September. VDA will continue the same plans it has with respect to Vance, meaning it will work to improve infrastructure and quality of life both on the base and in the community. Cooper, while reluctant to discuss his new contract, said he also wants to put Vance in the position to expand its current missions and work with both civilian and military entities to expand or add missions. "It's a combination of working with the city, state and federal government to do what we've been doing ...," he said. Cooper emphasized Vance is a joint services training base, and the addition of an \$8.7 million Armed Forces Reserve Center at the base will give Enid officials an opportunity to work with the Army, which they never have done before. The center, which has not been built yet, was added to Vance during the last Base Realignment and Closure round. "Now that the Army is there it opens up new areas of possibility with them and through Homeland Security. We never really looked at the Army," he said. Cooper wants to see what long-range Army plans are and how Vance can be a part of that. That is one reason Vance always worked to become a joint training base. He said those things don't just happen. "We are a joint base. We have been so successful there is no reason to recreate the wheel," Cooper said. "We have successful strategies in place and will continue to work them. "Years ago, when the decision was made to be a joint training base, we knew because we'd been talking to them. Through our congressional delegation, we suggested why not Vance, and they agreed," he said. Vance has many advantages, such as protected airspace, additional land, outstanding infrastructure, a great quality of life, Cooper said. However, the situation is a constant work in progress. In the past, VDA worked to assure Enid had adequate doctors in specialties, helped improve the school system and created four-year college degree education options here. As bases that were designated to close by BRAC are shut down and others are realigned,

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missions will come available, and that is why a continuation of work to improve Vance is necessary, he said.

Mayor Ernie Currier said recently Cooper agreed to make monthly reports to the city commission, to keep city officials current with what he is doing.



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Spokesman: \$40 million for Vance projects possible

By Robert Barron Staff Writer

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— About \$40 million in federal money could be available for expansions at Vance Air Force Base in the 2007 military budget, Mike Cooper, Vance Development Authority liaison, said during a meeting Wednesday.

The money was allocated as the result of the last Base Realignment and Closure round.

“We need to be sure we’re ready to go, have our projects ready to present them and get them approved quickly,” Cooper told VDA members.

Cooper has headed up Vance preservation and enhancement efforts for years and is expected to become a consultant for VDA in September. He told VDA members it will not be known how much money Vance will receive until August or September.

Projects previously discussed include a \$4 million effort to pave and widen Wheat Capital Road, which runs south of the base and will be the access road for the \$8.7 million Armed Forces Reserve Center to be constructed on base, and a proposed extension of the crosswind runway at Enid Woodring Regional Airport. The runway needs to be extended to be able to accommodate Vance planes.

Another need at Vance is the proposed \$15.7 million combined operations center to house the base’s flying training squadrons.

In addition to building the reserve center at Vance, the last BRAC commission also decided to move some of the undergraduate pilot training program, as well as part of the Introduction to Fighter Fundamentals program, from Moody Air Force Base in Georgia to Vance. In all, Vance is slated to pick up at least 99 new jobs — 93 military and six civilian — along with 13 T-6 and 12 T-38 aircraft.

State military funding also will be available this year in the form of a \$1 million appropriation to aid bases in the state. Cooper said there will be between \$225,000 and \$250,000 available for Vance from the Oklahoma Strategic Military Planning Commission, for which he is chairman. Also discussed at Wednesday’s meeting were a couple of ongoing projects.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony will be 1:30 p.m. July 27 for the Southgate Road widening project. The project is part of the effort to extend Vance’s gates north one mile to enhance security. Cooper expects Gov. Brad Henry and Oklahoma Secretary of Transportation Gary Ridley to be present.

The runways at Kegelman Auxiliary Field near Jet are in the process of being improved. Cooper said the improvement will be a \$10 million project.

“That’s huge for us, bringing back runways that have been closed and give us more capability,” he said.

Also during the meeting, Cooper resigned as a member of VDA in anticipation of becoming a consultant to the group.

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